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DEVELOPMENT AND INTERNATIONAL ECONOMIC COOPERATION: DESERTIFICATION AND DROUGHT

Implementation of the Plan of Action to Combat Desertification and of the medium-term recovery and rehabilitation programme in the Sudano-Sahelian region

Report of the Secretary-General

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* A/48/50.

I. INTRODUCTION

1. The General Assembly, in its resolution 35/73 of 5 December 1980, requested the Governing Council of the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) to report every other year to the General Assembly, through the Economic and Social Council, on the overall implementation of the Plan of Action to Combat Desertification. Further, in its resolution 39/168 B of 17 December 1981, the Assembly requested the Governing Council to make the necessary arrangements at each session for submitting a report to the General Assembly, through the Economic and Social Council, on the implementation in the Sudano-Sahelian region of the Plan of Action to Combat Desertification.

2. In its decision 17/19 A, adopted on 21 May 1993, the Council authorized the Executive Director to submit the present report, which includes her report on the implementation of the Plan of Action to Combat Desertification in the Sudano-Sahelian region, on behalf of the Council, through the Economic and Social Council, to the General Assembly at its forty-eighth session.

II. IMPLEMENTATION OF THE PLAN OF ACTION TO COMBAT DESERTIFICATION (PACD) IN 1991-1992

A. *Technical assistance to Governments*

1. *National plans of action to combat desertification*

3. The UNEP Governing Council, in its decision 16/22 A of 21 May 1991, requested the Executive Director to assist, within available financial resources, countries prone to desertification, at their request, in developing programmes for combating desertification within their development plans. As a consequence, UNEP continued to assist member Governments in developing their national plans of action to combat desertification (NPACDs). In a joint undertaking with the Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA) and the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), UNEP assisted the Governments of Bahrain, Oman, the United Arab Emirates and Yemen in the preparation of their NPACDs. Due to the Iraq/Kuwait conflict and the relocation of ESCWA, some of the activities had to be postponed from the original period of 1990-1991 to 1992-1993.

4. UNEP assistance to the Governments of Argentina, Mongolia and Peru on which the Executive Director reported to the Council at its sixteenth session (UNEP/GC.16/16), continued in 1991-1992. The first drafts of NPACDs have been developed for Peru, in cooperation with the National Office for Natural Resources Evaluation (ONERN), and for Argentina, in cooperation with the Instituto Argentino de Investigaciones de las Zonas Aridas (IADIZA). UNEP provided consultancy assistance to the Government of Mongolia to finalize the draft NPACD and three project documents for donors' consideration at the NPACD review workshop in 1993.

2. *Pilot projects under the African Ministerial Conference on Environment (AMCEN) - Cairo Programme for African Cooperation*

5. Throughout 1991-1992 UNEP, through its Desertification Control Programme Activity Centre (PAC), continued to provide assistance to the Governments of Mozambique and Zimbabwe for the formulation and initiation of pilot village projects. In Zimbabwe, the implementation of pilot projects is under way, with financing support from the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA), and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP). In Mozambique, the follow-up of the project was hampered by the political situation in the project area.

6. In support of the AMCEN pilot village programme UNEP, with the Institute of Environmental Science of Nanjing, China, in 1990 started the training of African villagers and technicians in ecological farming. In October 1992, a training workshop was organized in Nanjing for 20 French-speaking African farmers and technicians from 17 countries.

B. *Regional actions and networks*

7. The role of subregional organizations in the efficient implementation of the PACD has been underlined by the Administrative Committee on Coordination (ACC). Accordingly, UNEP provided assistance in 1991-1992 to subregional organizations such as the Southern African Development Coordination Conference (SADCC); the Conference of Arab Ministers Responsible for Environment (CAMRE); the African Deserts and Arid Lands Committee (ADALCO); the Desertification Control Research and Training Network for Asia and the Pacific (DESCONAP); and the Task Force of Sahelian Dryland NGOs (GONGSA).

Southern African Development Coordination Conference (SADCC)

8. In response to the SADCC request to the members of the Inter-Agency Working Group on Desertification (IAWGD) in 1989, UNEP provided consultancies and training to support SADCC's formulation of the Plan of Action for the Kalahari-Namib Region (Integrated land-use planning, rangeland monitoring, protection and rehabilitation). During 1991-1992, UNEP supported the Environment and Land Management Sector Coordination Unit of SADCC to provide assistance to the Kalahari-Namib countries for elaborating and developing projects under the Plan.

Conference of Arab Ministers Responsible for Environment (CAMRE)

9. Through its Arab League Liaison Office in Cairo, UNEP has been assisting the Secretariat of CAMRE in initiating its priority environmental programmes, which include desertification control. CAMRE, in collaboration with UNEP and the Arab League Educational, Cultural and Scientific Organization (ALECSO), organized a subregional workshop for decision makers on the experiences and future orientations of the Green Belt Project of North Africa (GBPNA).

African Deserts and Arid Lands Committee (ADALCO)/African Ministerial Conference on the Environment (AMCEN)

10. UNEP's Desertification Control PAC continued to serve as the secretariat for the African Deserts and Arid Lands Committee (ADALCO) of AMCEN and serviced the fifth ADALCO meeting held in Harare in 1991. UNEP also assisted ADALCO through the provision of consultancies to carry out two subregional studies: strengthening of the Green Belt Project of North Africa; and development of the nubian sandstone aquifer.

Desertification Control Research and Training Network for Asia and the Pacific (DESCONAP)

11. The regional network of research and training centres on desertification control in Asia and the Pacific that makes up DESCONAP was established by the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP) in 1988, with financial support from UNDP and UNEP. The objective was to strengthen technical cooperation among the research and training institutions in the region by combating desertification through the development of appropriate expertise at the policy and programme-management levels and through the identification of investment projects. Eighteen Governments of the region (Afghanistan, Australia, Bangladesh, China, India, Indonesia, Iran, Japan, Mongolia, Nepal, Pakistan, Philippines, Thailand, Viet Nam and four CIS countries), three United Nations Organizations (UNDP), the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), and the World Meteorological

Organization (WMO), the South Asia Cooperative Environment Programme (SACEP) and a number of NGOs, including the International Council of Women (ICW), have joined the network and designated their official focal points.

12. Considering the extent of the problem of desertification and its impact on the land resources and population of the region, UNDP and UNEP have given high priority to DESCONAP.

13. The third Regional Consultative Meeting and Tripartite Review Meeting of the DESCONAP project was held in Thailand in February 1992, to consider its second phase and the 1992-1993 activities of its Action Plan on Desertification Control in Asia and the Pacific to the Year 2000.

14. During the period under review, the emphasis of the work programme was on activities related to desertification assessment; promotion of training and research on desertification control; technical cooperation among network members; and involvement of non-governmental organizations and women's groups.

15. Within the framework of DESCONAP, four regional seminars and workshops on issues related to desertification control were organized by ESCAP, in cooperation with UNEP and regional training and research institutions. With the aim of developing a unified methodological approach for desertification assessment and mapping, ESCAP, in cooperation with UNEP, organized in November 1992 an expert group meeting in Tehran for the Asia-Pacific and West Asia regions, hosted by the Government of Iran.

Task Force of Sahelian Dryland NGOs (GONGSA)

16. In cooperation with the International Institute for Environment and Development (IIED), UNEP supported the development and strengthening of the subregional "Survival in the Drylands" information network in the Sahelian countries by providing training for 35 people in participatory appraisal methods; holding two regional meetings of the Task Force of Sahelian Dryland NGOs (GONGSA); publishing eight *Haramata* newsletters and 16 issue papers; and producing 18 desertification maps and two wall charts.

17. In addition to improving the dissemination of relevant scientific and development information on desertification over the English- and French-speaking areas of Western Africa, UNEP provided support in the preparation of the declaration of the specific concerns of the Sahelian non-governmental organizations for the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED) as well as support for their inputs into the preparation of the *World Atlas of Desertification*.

C. *Training*

18. UNEP, in cooperation with Governments and regional training and research institutions, continued to conduct training programmes in combating desertification to enhance the technical capabilities of desertification-prone countries in tackling desertification and promote awareness of the threat. During 1991-1992, UNEP, in cooperation with ESCAP, the Arab Centre for the Study of Arid Zones and Drylands (ACSAD), IADIZA, UNEPCOM, the Green Belt Project of North Africa, ALECSO and the Governments of Argentina, China, Egypt, Mongolia and the Syrian Arab Republic organized training courses, workshops and seminars.

19. A total of 231 participants from Africa, Asia and Latin America were trained in the management of dryland natural resources, sustainable food production, monitoring and assessment of desertification, increased application of new technologies and public information. In keeping with UNEP policy, most of the training for developing countries was organized within the regions concerned: in Argentina, China, Egypt, Mongolia, the Syrian Arab Republic and Tunisia. In addition, IAWGD members, namely, the United Nations Sudano-Sahelian Office (UNSO), WMO, ESCAP and the

International Institute for Environment and Development (IIED) organized training courses related to desertification control for a total of 4,900 participants from developing countries affected by desertification.

D. *Assessment and mapping*

20. In accordance with General Assembly resolutions 39/168 of 17 December 1989, and 44/172 of 19 December 1989, and encouraged by Governing Council decision 16/22 A, the Desertification Control PAC, in close cooperation with the UNEP Global Resource Information Database (GRID) PAC, and drawing on the data available at the University of East Anglia, United Kingdom (climate); the International Centre for Arid and Semi-arid Lands Studies of the Texas Technical University, United States (land statistics); and the International Soil Reference and Information Centre, Netherlands (soil degradation), completed four major undertakings during the period under review. The work was part of UNEP's general contribution to the UNCED preparatory process and provided inputs for Agenda 21, chapter 12 (Managing fragile ecosystems: combating desertification and drought).

21. The assessments covered the following areas:

(a) Refinement and operationalization of the definition of desertification, for the purpose of assessment and mapping;

(b) Refinement and quantification of the concept of world's drylands, for the purpose of desertification assessment;

(c) Assessment of the global status of desertification, showing its occurrence in the world's drylands:

(i) By types of drylands (hyper-arid, arid, semi-arid, and dry sub-humid);

(ii) By continent;

(iii) By major types of land use (irrigated croplands, rainfed croplands, and rangelands); and

(iv) By degree of land degradation (slight-to-none, moderate, severe, and very severe).

22. The outputs of the above three assignments were reviewed by members of DESCON, IAWGD and several expert panels, and were submitted, through the Governing Council at its third special session (see UNEP/GCSS.III/3), to the fourth session of the UNCED Preparatory Committee.

23. The fourth major undertaking entailed assistance in the preparation and publication (by Edward Arnold Publishers, London) of the *World Atlas of Desertification*, containing maps of thematic indicators of desertification. The atlas was made available to Governments at UNCED.

24. The Governing Council, in its decision 16/22 D, underlined the need to further refine the definition of the concept of desertification, taking into account recent findings about the influence of climate fluctuations and the resilience of soils. In the report of the Executive Director to the Governing Council at its third special session "Status of Desertification and Implementation of the United Nations Plan of Action to Combat Desertification" (UNEP/GCSS.III/3) desertification is defined as "land degradation in arid, semi-arid and dry sub-humid areas (drylands) resulting mainly from adverse human impact. It is a widespread but discrete process of land degradation in space throughout the drylands, which differs significantly from the phenomenon of observed cyclic oscillations of vegetation productivity at desert fringes ("desert expansion or contraction") revealed by satellite data and related to climate fluctuations".

25. To understand better the relationship between desertification and climate fluctuations, UNEP, with WMO and the International Council of Scientific Unions/International Geosphere-Biosphere Programme (ICSU/IGBP) and some national meteorological services, initiated a study on the interactions of desertification and climate. The first phase of the study, to be completed in 1993, has three major components: impact of climate change on desertification; impact of desertification on climate; impact of climatic variability, including drought, on desertification.

26. The issue of the resilience of soils is more complicated, as there are no recent findings except for a general notion by some geographers that soils of drylands have appeared more resilient than was previously described. However, this can only be proven once assessments can be based on a multitude of local direct measurements, rather than on global indirect estimates.

27. A UNEP-cosponsored International Symposium on Soil Resilience and Sustainable Land Use, held in Budapest from 28 September to 2 October 1992, brought together 164 scientists, representing 33 countries and 18 international organizations (including Commissions and Standing Committees of the International Society of Soil Science (ISSS)). The scientists concluded that soil science had no established definition for soil resilience and that the concept of soil resilience, particularly in terms of measurable parameters, was not used by soil scientists. In addition, the concept was considered to be too vague at present to be of any practical use. The symposium recommended a study of soil resilience and its relevance to sustainability of land use, including agriculture. ISSS is to place the issue on its agenda of scientific research priorities. UNEP is also assisting in the organization of a symposium on soil resilience and soil management, to be held within the fifteenth International Congress of Soil Science in Mexico in 1994.

28. In accordance with Governing Council decision SS.III/1, paragraph 12 (a) (i), requesting UNEP to give strong emphasis to "refining the assessment of desertification especially at the regional and national levels", UNEP is currently undertaking several activities. In cooperation with ESCAP, FAO and UNDP, UNEP is assisting in preparing a comprehensive report for the Secretary-General on combating aridity, soil erosion, salinity, waterlogging, desertification and the effects of drought in South Asia, as requested by the Economic and Social Council in its resolution 1991/97. The report contains detailed and precise data on the status of desertification in the South Asia region, that encompasses eight countries with a total population of over one billion. It will be presented to the Economic and Social Council's substantive session of 1993 and, as decided by the Council in 1992, will be an input for the negotiations on the convention on drought and desertification.

29. UNEP initiated a project for the world-wide accumulation of data on successful desertification control projects on the local or national scale, with a view to disseminating the experience of reliable success stories for replication elsewhere under similar socio-economic and ecological conditions. The database will complement existing data on the extent of desertification in the world and assist in mobilizing the resources needed to combat desertification. In cooperation with UNDP and other United Nations agencies, support is provided for developing countries for national and regional capacity-building in the area of desertification assessment on local, provincial and national scales. The aim is to establish national and regional facilities for use by the Governments concerned and for the permanent monitoring of desertification.

E. *Monitoring*

30. Governing Council decision SS.III/1, paragraph 12 (a) (ii), requests the Executive Director to give strong emphasis in the work programme to "promoting the adoption and the monitoring and evaluation of the effectiveness of the policy guidelines and course of action presented in chapter III of the report of the Executive Director" (UNEP/GCSS.III/3).

Within the United Nations system there are at present three valid documents that address the global problem of desertification and that contain policy guidelines and courses of action:

(a) The Plan of Action to Combat Desertification adopted by the United Nations Conference on Desertification (UNCOD) in 1977 and endorsed by the General Assembly. The substance of the Plan of Action is still valid as indicated in the approved findings and recommendations of the external evaluation of it in 1990 as endorsed by the UNEP Governing Council in its decision 16/22 D of 31 May 1991;

(b) Chapter III of the Executive Director's report to the third special session of the Governing Council (UNEP/GCSS.III/3) which was noted with appreciation by the Council in its decision SS.III/1, paragraph 12 (a) (iii) and which contains the revised recommendations of the Plan of Action; and

(c) Chapter 12 of Agenda 21, adopted by UNCED in June 1992 and endorsed by the General Assembly at its forty-seventh session.

31. The above three documents are similar in content with regard to concerning the policy guidelines and courses of action. At the national and regional levels, it is up to Governments to decide which of the documents would be most practical for use as guidelines. At the international and global levels, Agenda 21, as the latest document, incorporating earlier recommendations, will be used as the programming guideline by UNEP and other agencies and organizations of the United Nations system, but useful details will also be drawn from the earlier documents.

32. The Council at its third special session further requested the assignment of benchmarks and indicators of progress. This is a long-term undertaking to be implemented together with other indicators of global change within the system-wide Earthwatch programme. At present, an intensive world-wide discussion is taking place on the parameters to be monitored and the data to be collected with regard to both the physical changes taking place and the human dimensions. Several international initiatives relevant to the problem of desertification are being pursued globally and regionally, such as the database core project of ICSU/IGBP, and the World Soil and Terrain Digital Database (SOTER) project of UNEP/FAO/International Soil Reference Information Centre.

33. UNEP's Desertification Control PAC is actively participating in the initiatives outlined above, besides developing its own methodologies, and has planned relevant activities for the next biennium. The major emphasis will be on establishing an international network of sites for monitoring and assessing ecological and socio-economic change. Sites will be identified in the dryland countries that participate in the network. Each site, or preferably a transect representing different ecological situations, will remain national property, but will be available for the activities of the network. The network will be an element of the global Earthwatch programme, with an international coordinating unit and databank. These plans will be appropriately adjusted, once an international convention on desertification and drought has been adopted.

F. *Information and Database*

34. In 1991-1992, UNEP continued to disseminate information on programme results and problems related to desertification control around the world. Issue 18, 19, 20 and 21 of the *Desertification Control Bulletin* were published and distributed, with 4,500 English copies per issue. The *World Atlas of Desertification* (800 copies), containing maps of thematic indicators of desertification in three sections - global, regional (for Africa), and national - with various case-studies for different continents, has been published and was distributed to Governments at UNCED and to relevant professionals in all regions of the world. In accordance with Governing Council decision SS.III/1, paragraph 10, the report on the status of desertification and implementation of the United Nations Plan of Action to Combat Desertification was published and submitted to the UNCED preparatory process. *The World Desertification Bibliography* has been updated and distributed to libraries, research institutions, United Nations organizations and universities (800 copies). During the period under review, a total of 15,000 copies of the above publications and of other documents on desertification control were disseminated to interested parties around the world.

III. INTER-AGENCY WORKING GROUP ON DESERTIFICATION (IAWGD) AND COORDINATION OF THE IMPLEMENTATION OF PACD WITHIN THE UNITED NATIONS SYSTEM

35. The eighteenth regular meeting of IAWGD was convened in Geneva at the headquarters of the World Meteorological Organization (WMO) from 9 to 10 September 1991, immediately preceding the eighth session of the Consultative Group for Desertification Control (DESCON) to review the documentation prepared for the UNCED preparatory process. The following United Nations Secretariat units, organizations and agencies participated in the meeting: FAO, UNCED secretariat, UNEP, UNESCO, UNSO/UNDP, United Nations University (UNU) and WMO.

36. The 19th regular meeting of IAWGD was held in Vienna from 14 to 15 September 1992. Eleven United Nations Secretariat units, organizations and agencies - United Nations Department of Economic and Social Development (DESD), ESCAP, ESCWA, FAO, Office of the United Nations Disaster Relief Coordinator (UNDRO), UNEP, UNESCO, United Nations Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO), UNSO, World Food Programme (WFP) and WMO, - and three subregional organizations, Arab Centre for the Study of Arid Zones and Drylands (ACSAD), the Sahel and Sahara Observatory (OSS), and the Southern African Development Coordination Conference (SADCC) participated. The Group reviewed 10 reports on the implementation of the PACD (by DESD, ESCAP, ESCWA, FAO, UNDRO, UNEP, UNESCO, WFP and World Health Organization) and preliminary plans by the United Nations system to implement chapter 12 of Agenda 21.

37. The activities undertaken and the assistance to developing countries provided by the United Nations system for the implementation of the Plan of Action to Combat Desertification include:

- Assistance to countries to develop strategies to combat desertification, provided by ESCAP, ESCWA, the Economic Commission of Africa (ECA), FAO, the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD), UNDP, UNEP, UNSO, World Bank;

- Projects aiming at integrated land use development, implemented or supported by DESD, FAO, International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD), UNDP, UNEP, UNESCO, UNSO, World Bank, WMO;

- Activities in the fields of drought-preparedness, drought monitoring and/or drought relief, which are well established in the programmes of DESD, FAO, IFAD, UNDP, UNDRO, WFP, WHO, WMO;

- Research projects and technology development programmes, supported by DESD, FAO, IFAD, UNDP, UNESCO, UNEP, UNIDO, UNSO, World Bank;

- Activities related to assessment and monitoring of desertification, carried out by DESD, ESCAP, FAO, IFAD, UNDP, UNEP, UNSO, WMO;

- Support for relevant training courses, scientific seminars and workshops, provided by ESCAP, FAO, IFAD, UNDP, UNESCO, UNEP, UNSO, WFP, WMO;

- Activities to raise public awareness of dryland degradation, carried out by DESD, FAO, IFAD, regional economic commissions, UNDP, UNEP, UNESCO, and UNSO.

38. The Working Group at its nineteenth regular meeting noted that Agenda 21, chapter 12, with its six programme areas could appropriately be considered as the new framework for activities addressing desertification and drought-related problems. It also noted that chapter 12 builds upon the PACD adopted by UNCOD in 1977. Accordingly, many agencies, while still in the process of consolidating their approaches to the implementation of Agenda 21, are re-orienting their existing activities to fit into the new framework and are focussing on new activities to fill any gaps.

39. The Group further recalled that a major constraint in implementing anti-desertification programmes was the lack of financial and other resources. In this regard, it was noted that the participants in the Global Environment Facility (GEF) had agreed to consider anti-desertification projects for financing under the Facility, as long as they were related to the four adopted global priority areas of GEF. The Group considered it important to continue the efforts to establish desertification as a priority issue on its own merits within GEF. Several members of the Group pointed out that in disaster prevention and rehabilitation there was a trend towards increasing assistance for relief rather than for developmental activities and that there was a need to find ways in which relief work could also serve longer-term development.

40. The Group discussed the proposal contained in Agenda 21 that the General Assembly establish an intergovernmental negotiating committee for the elaboration of an international convention on desertification, and was of the opinion that such a convention would enhance national and international efforts to combat desertification.

IV. THE CONSULTATIVE GROUP FOR DESERTIFICATION CONTROL (DESCON)

41. The Governing Council, in its decision 16/22 A, paragraph 9, authorized the Executive Director to convene the eighth session of DESCON as a session of special character to review the draft report on the implementation of the PACD before the report was made available to the Preparatory Committee of UNCED and to invite all interested Governments, donor agencies and intergovernmental agencies to that session.

42. The eighth session of DESCON was convened at WMO headquarters, Geneva, from 11 to 12 September 1991 and was attended by 16 Governments (Australia, Botswana, Brazil, Chile, China, Denmark, Ethiopia, Finland, Germany, Japan, Kenya, Nigeria, Peru, Sweden, Switzerland and the United States), seven United Nations organizations (FAO, UNCED Secretariat, UNEP, UNESCO, UNSO/UNDP, UNU and WMO), the Italian non-governmental organization CSARE-SILVA, the Intergovernmental Authority on Drought and Development (IGADD), the Islamic Development Bank and 12 independent consultants invited by UNEP.

43. The Group reviewed the UNEP draft report on the status of desertification and implementation of the United Nations Plan of Action to Combat Desertification; the draft report of the Secretary-General on financial studies requested by the General Assembly in its resolution 44/172 A on the Plan of Action; and chapter 6 of the state-of-the-environment report, on desertification and other kinds of land degradation. The comments and suggestions made by the Group were incorporated into the main documents before submission to the Governing Council at its third special session and, subsequently, to the fourth session of the Preparatory Committee of UNCED and to the Secretary-General of the United Nations.

V. FINANCING AND OTHER MEASURES IN SUPPORT OF THE PLAN OF ACTION TO COMBAT DESERTIFICATION

Expert Studies

44. In its resolution 44/172 A of 19 December 1989, the General Assembly requested the Secretary-General, with the assistance of the Executive Director of UNEP, to undertake studies on the financing of the PACD and other aspects of supporting it. The studies were carried out by UNEP and were reviewed by several expert panels, by the eighteenth IAWGD and DESCON-8 meetings and by the Governing Council at its third special session. Subsequently, the studies were made available to the UNCED Preparatory Committee at its fourth session with the aim of having them taken into account in the preparation of appropriate chapters of Agenda 21.

The Global Environment Facility (GEF)

45. On 30 April 1992, the participants in GEF decided that land degradation issues, primarily desertification and deforestation as they related to the priority areas of the Facility, would be eligible for financing by the GEF. UNEP and UNDP organized an expert workshop in Nairobi from 28 to 30 October 1992, to discuss the main global issues raised by desertification/land degradation that have direct relevance to the established objectives of GEF, as presently defined and to discuss those issues that have global significance, but which do not presently lie within the framework of GEF. At the workshop, the 21 participating experts from all continents and representatives of FAO, UNDP, UNEP, UNSO, World Bank and WMO made recommendations for the GEF to consider at its meeting in Abidjan in December 1992. At that meeting, the participants in GEF reiterated the earlier decision of 30 April 1992, but did not reach consensus on including land degradation in the GEF as a priority area in its own right.

The Consultative Group for Desertification Control (DESCON)

46. In its decision 16/22 B, the Governing Council recommended: "pending action by the General Assembly on the recommendations of the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development, the mandate of the Consultative Group for Desertification Control should be changed to concentrate on information exchange and co-ordination, reviewing the status of the Plan of Action to Combat Desertification and exchanging information on scientific research national programmes and the implementation of the Plan of Action to Combat Desertification and advising on further action against desertification". In line with that decision, DESCON did not take any action towards financing of the PACD.

47. Further, in its decision 16/22 A the Governing Council invited "donor Governments, intergovernmental bodies, including aid agencies and non-governmental organizations, to accord high priority in their bilateral and multilateral assistance activities to national programmes for combating desertification and for the rehabilitation of degraded land resources and to take into account the promotion of long-term ecological and social rehabilitation programmes in areas prone to desertification". In its

decision 16/22 B, the Council invited "the international community to create the necessary economic and financial conditions that would enable countries prone to desertification to appropriate part of their resources to combat desertification". Despite the urgent need for action in this field, no country or agency has reported any tangible progress in according high priority to programmes for combating desertification and rehabilitating degraded land.

VI. ACTIVITIES OF THE UNITED NATIONS SUDANO-SAHELIAN OFFICE IN 1991 AND 1992

Introduction

48. During 1991 and 1992, UNSO maintained a strong programme of assistance to the countries of the Sudano-Sahelian region, aimed at securing sustainable economic and human development, and focused on three major themes: the strengthening or creation of national capacities in planning and coordination for the improved management of natural resources; operational field activities; and public information and awareness-building activities. These were all supported and combined with resource mobilization. In addition, in accordance with General Assembly resolution 44/172 B of 19 December 1989 and Governing Council decision 16/22 C of 31 May 1991, an integral part of UNSO's work programme in 1991 and 1992 comprised assistance to the Sudano-Sahelian countries in preparation for UNCED.

A. *Planning, coordination and monitoring*

49. During the period under review, UNSO further strengthened its programme of assistance in planning, coordinating and monitoring the sustainable use of productive resources. The strategic framework process involves either the strengthening or the setting up of an institutional or inter-ministerial mechanism to coordinate the preparation of a national management strategy for natural resources and the implementation of the programme. UNSO currently supports the strategic framework process in 17 Sudano-Sahelian countries, with activities at various levels of implementation, depending on the country's specific situation. UNSO's financial support for those activities averages between $200,000 and $400,000 per activity, over a one- to two-year period.

50. Experience gained in assisting the Ecological Monitoring Centre in Senegal has resulted in the introduction of a more demand-driven approach to strengthening the national capacity, reinforcing the database and creating national networks for ecological monitoring, which are an important tool in environmental management. UNSO is currently initiating environmental information system (EIS) activities in Burkina Faso, Cape Verde, Gambia, Ghana, Ethiopia, Mali, Niger, Uganda and the United Republic of Tanzania. At the same time, with UNSO support, the Senegal Ecological Monitoring Centre is developing into an independent, self-financing institution, which also serves as a regional training centre.

51. UNSO continued the ongoing process of harmonizing the various natural-resource and environmental management programmes in the region. Further consultative meetings were organized at UNSO headquarters in April 1991 and November 1992, bringing together the organizations involved in such harmonizing work, namely, UNDP, UNEP, FAO, UNSO, the World Bank and IUCN - the World Conservation Union.

52. In light of the decisions of UNCED, UNSO is broadening existing strategic framework programmes in order to contribute to UNDP's new capacity-building initiative to develop and fund environmentally related capacity-building activities. This is an area in which UNSO has considerable expertise and should play a pioneer role.

53. In cooperation with UNDP, the World Bank and the African Development Bank, in 1992 UNSO launched a Joint Regional Programme Facility, which aims to strengthen national capacities to integrate the environmental dimension into all aspects of development planning. The facility will also establish a network of African experts and institutions, with the aim of fostering technical cooperation among African countries.

54. Other initiatives which have furthered regional information exchange include UNSO's cooperation with the Sahel and Sahara Observatory (OSS). An OSS/UNSO "Survey of observation structures" was completed in 1992, which gives a comprehensive summary of the major activities in ecological monitoring.

B. *Operational field activities*

55. UNSO concentrates on projects and programmes geared towards integrated resource management and highlighting specific thematic areas - integrated village-based land management; pastoral development; and rangeland management. By incorporating past experience into innovative new approaches, relevant and replicable methodologies and techniques have been developed, which can be incorporated into plans for the sustainable development of natural resources and applied to other areas with similar ecological problems. This is very much in line with the thrust of Agenda 21 in relation to drought and desertification activities.

56. During 1991-1992, new field projects were approved for *inter alia*, agro-pastoral development in Chad and Kenya, land protection and desertification control in Sudan and Uganda, environmental education and awareness-building in Benin, and developing the national components of a regional land rehabilitation programme to provide tree seeds in Djibouti, Ethiopia, Sudan and Uganda. Subsequent phases of several existing projects were approved, for example assistance for green belt management around Niamey (Niger), together with various regional projects.

57. A new village-based land management project in Sudan, based around El Odaya in Kordofan, involves some 20,000 people in 66 villages. Focusing on desertification control, the project aims to establish self-reliant rural communities that develop and manage their own environment, supported by a revolving fund, 25 per cent of which will be devoted to activities proposed by women in the villages.

58. In Uganda, the Karamoja women's project is designed to promote socio-economic development and the environmental protection in Uganda's most arid, drought-prone region. The project includes an innovative pilot credit scheme for agricultural, agro-forestry and horticultural development. In addition, its approach encourages the participation of the community natural resource management, whereby the women design and implement the project.

59. Among ongoing programmes, the Sahel Programme, with a total budget of more than $25 million over five years, involves village land-based management in Burkina Faso, Niger and Senegal. In partnership with the beneficiaries, the aim is to develop easily applicable management techniques for land development and natural resources, for use both nationally and in other similar areas, and to define and implement land management plans in cooperation with the participating villages.

60. Innovative projects for desertification control involving agricultural and rangeland management have been formulated for Benin, Eritrea, Kenya, Niger and Sudan.

61. Two new interregional projects emphasize the importance given to cooperation with non-governmental organizations. The first, implemented by the non-governmental organization SOS Sahel, is developing and refining participatory evaluation processes; the second, implemented by the

International Institute for Environment and Development (IIED), is designed to provide a framework for dialogue and long-term cooperation between the research community and non-governmental organizations.

C. *Information activities*

62. Information and awareness-building activities not only complement UNSO's work programme, but have various other functions. The publications prepared for UNCED on the status of drought and desertification and on alternative means of production serve to increase knowledge and awareness of drought and desertification in the Sudano-Sahelian region. The *Information Notes for UNCED* were published to assist delegations from the Sudano-Sahelian countries at the Preparatory Committee session in March 1992 and at the Conference itself. The *UNSO Report for 1990-1991* and a video production on UNSO activities were produced for a wide audience, to provide information and mobilize resources within the countries, the United Nations system and the donor community.

63. To disseminate the useful results of field experience, UNSO prepared two technical publications, the first dealing with reforestation in Ethiopia, and the second on sand encroachment control in Mauritania. UNSO also supported the making of a prize-winning and widely distributed film entitled "Rivers of Sand", based on a successful project for the rehabilitation of Bourgou grass areas in the inner delta of the Niger River, and short videos featuring UNSO projects: one on protecting the Road of Hope in Mauritania against sand encroachment (completed) and another on gum arabic rehabilitation in the Sudan (in preparation).

D. *Resource Mobilization*

64. The UNEP/UNDP joint venture to support UNSO in implementing the Plan of Action, in the Sudano-Sahelian region contributes the seed financing for project identification, formulation and monitoring, pilot projects, support to regional activities and organizations, information and awareness-building and training. In adopting its programme budget, the UNEP Governing Council, in recognition of UNSO's work and of the importance of the joint venture's support to UNSO's activities, approved the doubling of the programme support for 1991-1992.

65. Contributions to UNSO's general resources increased consistently, from $2.9 million in 1984 to $8.3 million in 1991. Earmarked funds also rose steadily. During 1991-1992, a total of 52 new projects were approved, with a value of $22,386,501. The support per project varies widely, from $3,000 for support-type projects, to about $7 million, reflecting UNSO's flexible approach in targeting different groups.

66. In 1992, however, financial support from donors declined considerably because of uncertainties about post-UNCED developments, restructuring within the United Nations system and the international economic situation. At the same time, a new momentum was created by UNCED, requiring additional funds to address the problems of the Sudano-Sahelian region and for the effective follow-up to Agenda 21. In the light of those considerations, UNSO has started a new round of consultations with traditional donors and has begun to investigate the possibilities of attracting new donors.

67. UNSO has also been looking into the potential for funding through other mechanisms, such as the GEF, multilateral funds, regional and subregional development banks and the private sector, including charitable foundations and individuals. The participants in GEF have agreed that land degradation (desertification and deforestation) projects would be eligible for GEF funding, provided they related to and were justified within one or more of the four priority areas of GEF.

68. UNDP/UNSO, UNEP and the World Bank organized a workshop in Nairobi in October 1992 for leading experts on land degradation, desertification and deforestation, with a view to establishing criteria for the land degradation projects eligible under GEF and reviewing the global dimensions of the desertification problem in order to justify desertification as a GEF priority area in its own right. The findings of the workshop were presented to the meeting of GEF participants in December 1992. At that meeting, UNSO submitted two projects, prepared as part of the fourth GEF tranche, for final review and approval. Both projects, one in Benin and the other in Sudan, seek to combine anti-desertification efforts with schemes for carbon sequestration, using better village-based land-use systems to prevent the over-exploitation of marginal lands.

69. With regard to collaboration with the regional development banks, new initiatives include the Joint Regional Programme Facility mentioned in paragraph 53 above, supported by UNSO, UNDP, the World Bank and the African Development Bank. In order to tap into the resources available from corporations, trusts and individuals, UNSO supported the mobilization of resources related to the Drought Fund established by the Organization of African Unity.

E. *UNCED preparatory process and its follow-up*

UNCED preparations

70. UNSO's aim during the preparatory process for UNCED was to assist the Sudano-Sahelian countries to take full advantage of the opportunity presented by the Conference to focus on the interdependence of environmental issues and development and to integrate environmental concerns into their development processes. It was particularly important to the Sudano-Sahelian countries to ensure that drought and desertification issues were placed high on the agenda of UNCED. To that end, UNSO assisted countries in defining their priorities by supporting the establishment of national committees for UNCED and the preparation of national reports, by building awareness of the issues related to UNCED and by supporting the participation of countries in preparatory meetings and at the Conference itself.

71. Through the Joint Support Committee, (comprising UNSO, the Permanent Interstate Committee to Combat Drought in the Sahel (CILSS) and the Intergovernmental Authority on Drought and Development (IGADD)) UNSO organized two subregional meetings, one in Ouagadougou in February 1991 and the other in Cairo in July 1991, to facilitate a concerted approach to common subregional concerns. The outcome of those meetings - "The Sudano-Sahelian Platform for Action on UNCED Negotiations and Beyond" - contributed to the African Common Position for UNCED.

72. As a member of the Joint Secretariat (comprising UNDP, UNEP, ECA, OAU, the African Development Bank, and the UNCED Secretariat), UNSO helped to organize and participated in the preparatory activities leading to the meeting of African Ministers of Planning and Environment, held in Abidjan in November 1991, which adopted the African Common Position.

73. As a participant in the UNCED Preparatory Committee working party on land and agriculture, UNSO cooperated closely with the UNCED secretariat and other United Nations agencies and contributed substantially to the preparation of Conference position papers on African issues and the elaboration of the programme areas on drought and desertification to be included in chapter 12 of Agenda 21. In that context, UNSO produced two special detailed studies: an "Assessment of desertification and drought in the Sudano-Sahelian region: 1985-1991", prepared in accordance with Governing Council decision 16/22 C, paragraph 3, to complement the UNEP report on the status of desertification and implementation of the Plan of Action to Combat Desertification (UNEP/GCSS.III/3) and "Alternative and sustainable systems of production and livelihood in marginal lands", investigating productive ways of generating income in stressed ecosystems, drawing on examples world-wide.

Agenda 21

74. UNCED drew attention - unprecedented since UNCOD in 1977 - to drought and desertification as problems of major concern affecting the global environment. The key environmental problems for countries in arid, semi-arid and sub-humid areas of Africa are drought and desertification and, as such, these were thus presented as priority areas for the conference agenda.

75. Chapter 12 of Agenda 21, containing the decisions of the Conference on drought and desertification has now become the new frame of reference for anti-desertification measures, providing the guidelines for future action and the basis for evaluating current activities. It contains six programme areas which are concerned with the impact of desertification and drought and the underlying causes, mainly poverty. These major areas build on and embody the earlier Plan of Action adopted by UNCOD in 1977, which UNSO is already mandated to implement, on behalf of UNEP, in the Sudano-Sahelian region.

76. UNSO's approach, integrating human development and natural resource management, and its ongoing activities accord well with Agenda 21. This approach and the experience gained over nearly 20 years in assisting dryland countries to combat drought and desertification strongly supports UNSO's role in implementing the anti-desertification measures outlined in Agenda 21.

UNCED follow-up

77. Agenda 21 gives guidelines for the future development of UNSO, with emphasis on strengthening the ongoing programme of assistance in planning and coordination and programme and project development, and in investigating new fields related to drought-preparedness and alternative production systems.

78. As concerns the proposed convention on desertification, in line with the request contained in chapter 12 of Agenda 21, the General Assembly in its resolution 47/188 of 22 December 1992 decided to establish an Intergovernmental Negotiating Committee for the elaboration of an international convention to combat desertification in those countries experiencing serious drought and/or desertification, particularly in Africa, with a view to finalizing such a convention by June 1994. In the same resolution, the General Assembly invited UNSO to "assist the countries covered under its mandate in their preparations and participation in the negotiating processes and to mobilize resources for this purpose". In assisting the African countries in preparing negotiation process defining a joint understanding on the priority issues and objectives and, as far as possible, adopting a common position and approach, UNSO supported the consultative meeting organized by the OAU in Addis Ababa in October 1992.

79. To address those programme areas of chapter 12 of Agenda 21 which have not yet been given special emphasis by UNSO, programmes are being drawn up for consolidated drought-preparedness and drought relief, taking into account national planning framework processes. Attention is also being given to assisting alternative livelihood programmes for drought and desertification-prone areas, which will contribute to poverty alleviation and assist environmental refugees.

80. In its paragraph 38.27, Agenda 21 calls for strengthening the role of UNSO, operating under the umbrella of UNDP and with the support of UNEP, so that UNSO can assume an appropriate major advisory role and participate effectively in the implementation of the provisions of Agenda 21 related to combating drought, desertification and land resource management. The experience gained by UNSO over the years could be used by all countries affected by drought and desertification, in particular those in Africa, with special attention to countries most affected or classified as least-developed countries.

81. Building on the existing close cooperation with the Permanent Inter-State Committee for Drought Control in the Sahel (CILSS) and IGADD, UNSO has made initial moves to create closer ties with other appropriate regional and subregional organizations, such as the Southern African Development Coordination Conference (SADCC) and the Maghreb Arab Union. Collaboration is also being strengthened with other regional partners, such as OAU, ECA and the African Development Bank, particularly in subregional consultations, joint strategic programmes related to the provisions of chapter 12 of Agenda 21 and support for the negotiation process for the desertification convention.

82. For UNSO's initiatives to be successful, however, it is essential to secure substantial additional resources in order to step up its assistance programme, to maintain the momentum built up during UNCED and to implement the identified action programme.